AN OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH WORK "ELEMENTS OF HORROR IN THE SHORT STORIES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AND STEPHEN KING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY"

SYNOPSIS

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Introduction

Literature is an art form, or any single writing deemed to have artistic or intellectual value, often due to deploying language in ways that differ from ordinary usage. Its Latin root literatura/litteratura (derived itself from littera: letter or handwriting) was used to refer to all written accounts, though contemporary definitions extend the term to include texts that are spoken or sung (oral literature). Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose; it can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expectations (genre).

A short story is fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. In contemporary fiction, a short story can range from 1,000 to 20,000 words. Because of the shorter length, a short story usually focuses on one plot, one main character (with a few additional minor characters), and one central theme, whereas a novel can tackle multiple plots and themes, with a variety of prominent characters. Short stories also lend themselves more to experimentation that is, using uncommon prose styles or literary devices to tell the story. Such uncommon styles or devices might get tedious and downright annoying, in a novel, but they may work well in a short story. The short story is the symbol of American literary independence. It was developed in America as a literary form suited to the American way of life. Some forerunners to the short story were anecdotes, parables, fables, ballads, sketches, and tales. Yet it was in America that the short story truly came into its own. **Edgar Allan Poe** is called the "father" of the short story because he is credited with setting up the first guidelines for the short story. According to Poe, the short story must have the following characteristics:

- It must produce a certain unique effect.
- It must have brevity (a reader should be able to read it in "one sitting").
- It must have unity.
- It must have intensity.

- It must begin with the first sentence (i.e. not spend too long on background, setting, introduction of characters, etc.).

Horror genre has a long tradition –aspects of the horror genre can be found as far back as **Beowulf;** in Shakespearian drama, or in Jon Webster's works like **The Duchess of Malfi** and **The White Devil.** However, in the end of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century the Gothic wave and the beginnings of horror as a distinct genre were introduced. Edgar Allan Poe was one of the pioneers of this genre as he inspired and influenced many other horror writers, like Charles Brockden Brown and Nathaniel Hawthorne along with that H. P. Lovecraft was one of Poe's great followers, though his writing career spans the first of half of the twentieth century his writing echoes Poe.

In the second half of the twentieth century a significant development was seen with the horror genre. Modern authors drew inspiration from previously mentioned writers and also from some important world events like world wars (as a source of fear, the feeling of psychic isolation or hopeless future), progress in technologies and chemicals, and raising importance of psychology and new findings in this field. Author like Stephen King, Robert Bloch, Anne Rice, Peter Straub or Clive Barker are the most significant examples of this post-war era, although the topics of their works differ.

Horror as a genre represents what terrifies and disgusts, what we fear and secretly desire at the same time. It uses monstrous, vile, violent, dehumanizing elements, and also employs dramatic suspense-building techniques by inserting these elements into stories. But horror fiction is not just a literary genre; it is also a construction, projection, and representation. Its elements are meaningful; their roots can be found in popular consciousness as well as in unconscious.Their representation in popular fictional form covers a wide range of presentation – from fairy tales and parables to blockbuster films. Also, one of the main functions of horror and its interpretation is the crucial "threshold" concept. Horror fiction tends to gain its effects from its imaginative strategies – pace, characterization, narratives, settings, perspectives.

The genre of horror is deeply rooted in the Gothic; it can be seen in the closeness of horror to the reality but its appearance as fantastic, for instance. The Gothic origin does not have impact only on the form – both entertaining and culturally as well as psychologically disturbing, but also on the location of the plot, presence of paradoxical forces, and disturbance of the safety of the routine. It provides personal, emotional, psychic, and energetic release.

Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King

Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King are arguably two of the best-known horror writers in the whole world. Despite the "horror" label, both authors' readership is very large and diverse, which confirms not only their talent and excellent dramatic narrative abilities, but also the popularity of the horror genre as such. The literary works of both authors, Poe especially, have been sources of inspiration to a great number of other horror writers; their usual themes and topics have become an almost compulsory ingredient in creating a horror story, and the influence of their writing style mirrored in the works of their contemporaries. The eventual success they both reached is not the only binding element though. That is the reason why the main focus of the research is the comparison of theliterary works of these two authors, crucial for the development of the horror genre, highlighting the similar or analogical elements in their respective creative endeavours.

Despite living in different centuries, they are considered the main representatives of the horror genre. Poe as the predecessor or even inventor, King as not only his follower, but also the generally acknowledged contemporary "horror-master"; they both have highly contributed to this literary genre. A comparative study of the works of these masters will bring into light the other aspects of the genre as well.

Objectives

The critical study of the horror genre and the selected horror short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen king will certainly broaden the mind and sharpen the critical insight. The present research work will be done to achieve following objectives:

1) To study the characteristic features ofshort stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen king.
2) To throw the light on horror literature and its development.
3) To study the elements that create horror atmosphere in literature.
4) To study the various elements of horror in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen king.
5) To study and critically evaluate the writers' style and the art of storytelling.
6) To bring into light the other aspects of the horror genre by doing a comparative study of the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen king.

Data Collection

The data required for the present research works will be collected from the following sources:

1) Primary Data

Primary Data will be collected from the original short stories written by Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King.

2) Secondary Data

Secondary Data will be collected from the journals, reference books and critical books will be used for the research. As the study does not need any field work, the textual analysis approach will be followed for the present research. The scholarly articles will be used with proper citation for the present research.

Hypothesis

The present study will help to find out the various elements that are responsible for creating horror atmosphere in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King. The elements include violence,supernatural,psychologically abnormal characters, mystery etc. and their short stories show the definite characteristics like fear, suspense, mystery, surprise etc. The study will also help to reveal that the horror literature, despite of being repulsive and attractive at the same time; it is appreciated by the readers.

Relevance and the Significance of the study

Fear is the oldest and strongest emotion which is embedded in us since beginning of time. The establishment of faith and religion was initiated by Fear. It was the fear of unknown and mysterious phenomena. To every unexplainable phenomenon people attributed a character, human or inhuman, which they associated with supernatural skills and invincible power. Anne Radcliffe, one of the first Gothic writers (The Mysteries of Udolpho) says that the horror “expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life.” This means, it brings Catharsis which is the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from strong or repressed emotions. That is the reason why it is important to study Horror.

Poe’s writing produced a man who was arguably the first writer of international stature to emerge from the US. Since his death, his work has had a profound and on-going influence on literature, music, film and art. One reason why he is still so important today is

that his stories, in particular, have shown an extraordinary capacity to mutate into other media. His Stories such as **The Red Death, The Pit and the Pendulum, William Wilson** and **The Black Cat** resonate with our own lives. There is great significance and richness of his work. He holds up a mirror to ourselves, and each time we read him we find something new.

Same way King is a master storyteller. He is able to create worlds infused with a sense of right and wrong, good and evil. He writes of familiar family crises, fears of the unknown and the yearning to belong. His stories provide a catharsis, sometimes even a sense of order. King may simplify, but he does it without contempt for his characters or readers. His appeal goes beyond the scares. They are the stories of danger, including elements of the supernatural mixed with human emotions that audiences can relate to. King is a talented author, like any other author who is able to touch our lives with interesting stories and well developed characters. His stories travel to very dark places and include the violence and mayhem that simultaneously fascinate and terrify us.

The evil lies within us and that is the reason why people like to read, write, watch, and talk about it. Sometimes the life has a way of being dark and ruthless and it makes us wonder at the nature of evil. That is why, there is great significance and relevance of the horror stories of these two geniuses.

Though individual research has been done on Poe and King; no solid comparative research has been done on these two writers. The objective behind Choosing "Elements of Horror in the Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King: A Comparative Study" as a research topic is to study horror genre, to study the elements of horror in the select short stories of Poe and King and to find out the similarities and differences in the writing styles of these two writers. The study will be significant in understanding the fundamentals of horror genre.

Methodology

The present study focuses on the comparison of the elements of horror in the selected short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King. The comparative analysis will be the central agenda of the present research work. The study does not call for any field work and will be based on the resource material both from print and electronic sources. The MLA Handbook of Research Methodology will be followed for citation and documentation of resources. The doctoral thesis will also follow the Ph.D. Ordinances of the University.

The research methodology used for the research will be analytical and exploratory based on primary and secondary sources. As the research does not need any field work; the texts of selected writers, the reference books, critical books, journals, magazines, newspapers and web material will be referred for the same.

Proposed Chapter Scheme

The thesis will be divided into five chapters.

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter will deal with defining Horror as a genre. The chapter will also include background to the horror literature and its development. Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe are generally regarded as the masters of the horror genre. King provoked serious critical attention to this genre and topics it may encompass. He contributed to the horror genre by using horror story as a socio-political allegory and similar attempts can be seen in Poe's Literature as an innovator. In both King and Poe there is a mixture of realism and symbolism. The present chapter will be the basis for the comparison and contrast between the elements of horror in the selected short stories of King and Poe.

Chapter II: Study of the elements of horror in the short stories of

Edgar Allan Poe

The second chapter will focus on the elements of horror in selected short stories of Edgar Allan Poe. To study the elements of horror; following short stories will be selected-

i) The Tell-Tale Heart: This short story deals with the effects of guilt on a person's psyche.
ii) The Pit and the Pendulum: In this sort story prisoner recounts his experiences as the victim of the Spanish Inquisition's torture methods.
iii) Hop-Frog: This story is about the fiery revenge of court jester named Hop-Frog.
iv) The Imp of the Perverse: This story focuses on a self-destructive demon that might be all in the narrator's head.
v) Berenice: In this story Berenice is the wife of Egaeus, who knows that she is dying. As her body wastes away, her teeth remain healthy, and they soon become the object of Egaeus' obsession.

Chapter III: Study of the elements of horror in the short stories of Stephen King

The third chapter will be the detailed study of the elements of horror in selected short stories of Stephen King. The following short stories will be selected for the study-

i) The Mist: This story centres around a man and his son, who live next to a lake in a small town in Maine who find themselves trapped in a grocery store in a horrible thunderstorm.
ii) Crouch End: In this short story a woman recounts in the police station her terrifying night, claiming she lost her husband on a street entitled Crouch End.
iii) Chattery Teeth: This story is about a salesman Bill Hogan who comes across broken "Chattery Teeth" which later on come to life.
iv) Gray Matter: In this short story a young boy's father transforms into something terrible at their house.
v) Quitters Inc.: This story revolves around a company called Quitters, Inc. which helps to quit smoking, but at a terrible price.

Chapter IV: Comparative Study of the elements of horror in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King

One of the main aims of this thesis is to show the analogy of two horror writers' works. Both the writers lived in the different eras. Poe lived in the first half of the nineteenth century; the genre of horror was at its beginnings and that is why Poe was the most significant poet and writer of this era but he was unappreciated at his time. In contrast, King has lived in the second part of the twentieth century. The genre of horror has already had its history and significance, although publicly not much appreciated. King is however one of the best-selling authors in the whole world. Nevertheless, there are many similarities in works of Poe and king and the comparative study of those similar and contrasting elements of horror and their style of writing will be done in this chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The last chapter will conclude the entire research work. The observations and the evidently proved finding will be documented in this chapter. Commendable conclusions drawn from the study will be recorded in this last chapter. The comparative and critical analysis of the elements of horror and the writing style in the selected short stories of Poe and

King will be pointed out here. This chapter will also underline the relevance and significance of the study along with that further areas of research will also be pointed out.

The present synopsis is mere an outline of research work. The changes may be inevitable in the chapter scheme or concerned study during the research work.

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